

KU Native Medicinal Plant Research Garden

Traditional medicinal and other uses of selected plants in the research area

Row 1, south, White sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*) — Tea used by Native Americans for stomach troubles and other ailments. Plant used ceremonially in purification rites.

Row 1, north, Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) — Occurs naturally throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere. Used extensively by Native Americans to stop bleeding and as an antibiotic and pain reliever in the treatment of wounds, and to treat fevers, colds, headaches and toothaches. Contains salicylic acid, a pain-relieving component of Aspirin. (U.S. Pharmacopeia 1863-1882)

Row 2, south, Blue wild indigo (*Baptisia australis*) — Contains rotenone, a natural insecticide. Also used as a dye plant. Unrelated to traditional indigo plant.

Row 4, south, Peppermint (*Mentha arvensis*) — Mint teas traditionally used by Native Americans and Europeans to aid digestion and to treat nausea, colds, coughs, congestion, sore throats and fevers.

Row 4, north, Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) — Traditional Native American uses include an infusion of the leaves to treat upset stomach; roots for constipation; and application of the latex to warts, bee stings and cuts. Young seed pods and tender leaves and shoots were cooked as greens and used in soup by the Potawatomi, Winnebago and other tribes. (U.S. Pharmacopeia 1820-1863, 1873-1882)

Row 5, south, Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) — Another common name for this plant, “pleurisy root,” derives from the practice of the Omaha and Ponca, and, later, doctors, using a decoction of boiled roots to treat pleurisy, an inflammation of the lining of the lungs. This medicine acts to increase fluid circulation, lymphatic drainage and bronchial dilation. (U.S. Pharmacopeia 1820-1905, National Formulary 1916-1936)

Row 5, north, Topeka purple coneflower (*Echinacea atrorubens*) — All nine *Echinacea* species have immune-stimulating compounds. Four occur in Kansas, which, for the past 100 years, has been the leading state in wild harvest of roots for the herbal product market. The root historically was and presently is the primary plant part used, but the entire plant also has been used. The most important species, *E. angustifolia*, was used by Plains tribes as a painkiller and for a variety of ailments, including toothache, coughs, colds, sore throats and snakebite. Topeka purple coneflower has a very limited natural distribution 100 miles wide from eastern Texas and Oklahoma into the Kansas Flint Hills to Topeka.

Row 6, north, Slender mountainmint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*) — A wild mint.

Row 7, south, Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) — Root used by several Native American tribes as a treatment for snake bite. Cordage made from the yucca-like fiber of the leaves has been found in Ozark caves in sandals that may be 10,000 years old. (Listed in U.S. Pharmacopeia 1820-1873 as an expectorant and emetic.)

Row 7, north, Wild bergamot/Beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*) — A wild mint. Contains high concentrations of Thymol, a natural antiseptic. (U.S. Pharmacopeia 1882-1950, National Formulary 1950-present)

Row 10, north, Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) — Very tasty and healthful as boiled greens in spring; leaves also used dried as tea. Stem fibers also used to make cordage.

U.S. Pharmacopeia and National Formulary: A book of public pharmacopeial standards for medicines, dosage forms, drug substances, medical devices and dietary supplements.

This handout should not be considered a recommendation for any of the uses listed.